

Employment falls by a further 227,700 in May

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Source: [Labour Force, Australia, May 2020](#)

Seasonally adjusted employment decreased by 227,700 people between April and May, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

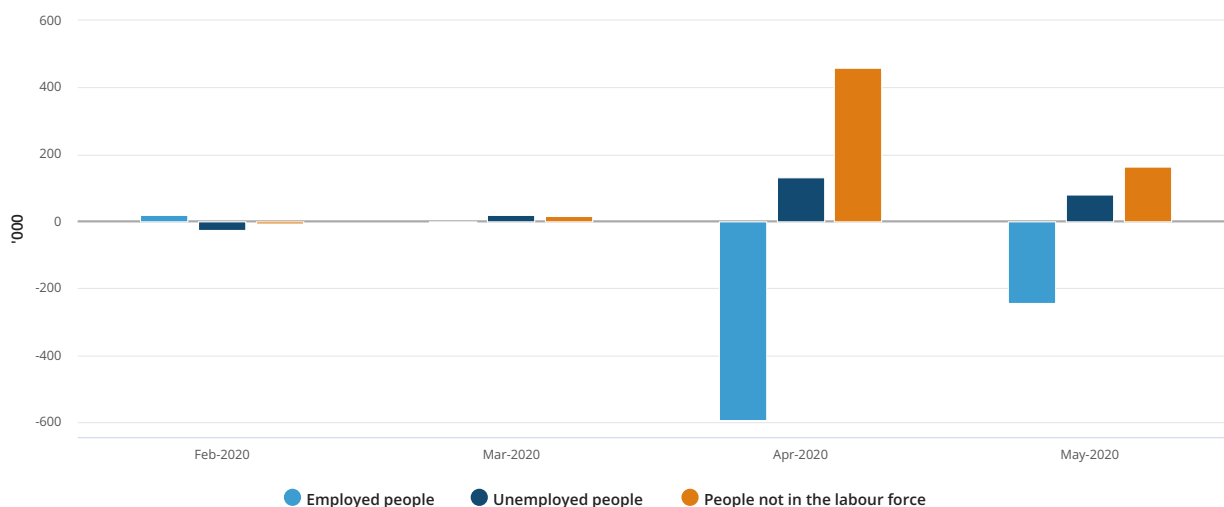
Bjorn Jarvis, head of labour statistics at the ABS, said: "The drop in employment, of close to a quarter of a million people, added to the 600,000 in April, brings the total fall to 835,000 people since March."

"In two months, the percentage of people aged 15 and over employed in Australia decreased from around 62.5 per cent to around 58.7 per cent."

Unemployment increased by 85,700 people to 927,600, and the unemployment rate increased by 0.7 percentage points to 7.1 per cent (from a revised 6.4 per cent in April and 5.2 per cent in March).

As in April, the size of the increase in the unemployment rate in May was reduced by larger than usual numbers of employed and unemployed people leaving the labour force. This was reflected in a further fall in the participation rate, down 0.7 percentage points to 62.9 per cent. The last time the participation rate was below 63 per cent was in January 2001.

Monthly changes in key populations



Monthly hours worked fell 0.7 per cent in May, to be down 10.2 per cent since March (with the April fall revised up to 9.5 per cent).

"The ABS estimates that a combined group of around 2.3 million people - around 1 in 5 employed people - were affected by either job loss between April and May or had less hours than usual for economic reasons in May," Mr Jarvis said.

The underemployment rate decreased by 0.7 percentage points in May, to 13.1 per cent, but remained 4.3 points above March.

The underutilisation rate, which combines the unemployment and underemployment rates, rose to a new record high of 20.2 per cent.

"Women continued to be more adversely affected by the labour market deterioration than men. Younger workers have also been particularly impacted," Mr Jarvis said.

The Labour Force release includes additional analysis of:

- hours worked;
- flows out of employment; and
- comparisons with US and Canadian data for May 2020.

More details are in the May 2020 issue of [Labour Force, Australia \(https://beta.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/may-2020\)](https://beta.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/may-2020). Further information, including regional labour market information and quarterly employment by occupation and industry, will be available in the upcoming May 2020 issue of [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed \(https://beta.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed\)](https://beta.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed), due for release on 25 June 2020.

The ABS would like to thank Australians for their continued support in responding to our surveys during such a difficult time, given how critically important this information is.

Media note

- The ABS has suspended publishing trend series for the COVID-19 period.
- Further information on additional labour market statistics can be found in 'Measuring the labour market impacts of COVID-19'; part of the suite of useful information available on [the ABS website \(https://www.abs.gov.au/covid19\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/covid19).
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